



November 18, 2011

Rolf Frankenbach
California Department of Water Resources
Division of Integrated Regional Water Management
Financial Assistance Branch
Post Office Box 942836
Sacramento, CA 94236

RE: Comments on Draft Proposal Solicitation Package Round 2

Dear Mr. Frankenbach,

We appreciate this opportunity to comment on the Department of Water Resources' (DWR) Proposition 84 IRWM Planning Grant Draft Proposal Solicitation Package Round 2 (Draft PSP). The San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority (Authority) administers the Westside Integrated Water Resource Plan for the benefit of 30 agricultural water districts, municipalities, disadvantaged communities, and other participating entities that comprise the Westside – San Joaquin Integrated Regional Water Management Region (Westside). In December 2010, the Authority submitted comments on DWR's Round 1 Planning Grant draft staff funding recommendations. After reviewing the Draft PSP, we find that many of the comments we made then remain relevant today. For expediency, we will summarize those comments:

- 1) Attachment 3 Work Plan: The Draft PSP states an application, "...shall contain all the necessary details..."; however, no specific example or definition of "necessary" is provided. In preparing our Round 1 application, we worked closely with DWR staff to ascertain a "necessary" level of detail but when our application was reviewed by others in DWR, it was found to be lacking. In order to minimize the subjectiveness of the review, we recommend DWR incorporate a succinct yet clear example of what it deems an appropriate level of detail. Examples would be helpful wherever subjective qualifiers are used in the Draft PSP.
- 2) Table 4 DAC Involvement: In our Round 1 application, we were criticized for not providing "sufficient detail" regarding the involvement of environmental justice organizations even though the Round 1 PSP made no mention of this apparent requirement. The Draft PSP also makes no mention of environmental justice. If DWR is going to consider involvement of environmental justice organizations when assessing applications, then the Draft PSP should state this and describe DWR's expectations on the matter.
- 3) Table 4 DAC Involvement, Schedule, Budget: Scoring for each of these components is proposed to be based in part upon "specificity" and "completeness". However, DAC

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planning efforts are often not at the same level of detail or quality as other planning efforts, which is why they need the planning assistance. This “chicken and egg” problem is acknowledged both in legislative language and the implementing guidelines through explicit and implicit deference to fund DAC participation and to make exceptions when considering their needs. Yet, in the Round 1 evaluations, DWR did not seem to allow for these differences when scoring applications. By not allowing for these differences, one of two undesirable outcomes could result: 1) DAC participation within regions may be suppressed because of the impact the adverse scoring has on the region as a whole, or 2) expectations about the level of funding that will be directed toward DACs will go unrealized. In order to avoid these unwanted effects, the Draft PSP should clearly state how DWR intends to evaluate DAC related proposals and what, if any, extraordinary consideration will be allowed DACs.

Further, we offer a few general observations. First, the role of the IRWM Regional Service Representative (RSR) should be explained in the Draft PSP. This person provides a critical communication service; one that we recommend be expanded. In our Round 1 development, we found our liaison to be a great informational resource and a valued participant in our stakeholder meetings. However, that role turned out to be unidirectional. While our expectation was that the regional liaisons would act as an informational resource to DWR application reviewers as well, that was not the case. No matter how well written, every application is going to generate questions and the RSRs should be relied upon during the evaluation process to facilitate answers.

Second, as a fellow public agency, we appreciate the responsibilities and obligations DWR has to account for the quality of its decisions and expenditure of public funds. However, it is our view that the standards now being applied have become too onerous for many agencies and that this reality is acting as a disincentive to participate in regional planning efforts. And while this reaction is of immediate worry, our larger concern is that the pessimism about IRWM grant funding potential will erode the public’s willingness to support such programs as the agencies struggling to justify the risks of preparing an application are those generally closest to ratepayers and the voting public.

Lastly, and related to the previous point, a review of the highest scoring Round 1 planning grant proposals suggests that awards focused primarily on regions developing or updating IRWMPs. While we appreciate the importance of planning for planning sake, we cannot lose sight of the fact that planning grants are also intended to foster the development or completion of components of IRWMPs for the purpose of enhancing regional planning efforts and to increase eligibility for implementation grant funding opportunities. By emphasizing the former at the expense of the latter, DWR has essentially chosen to punish those with existing, implemented IRWMPs. Whether this was a deliberate policy choice is unclear but if DWR is going to maintain this preference in Round 2, it should be clearly stated upfront in the Draft PSP so that agencies with mature IRWMPs can make fully informed decisions about how or whether to develop an application.

In closing, again, we appreciate this opportunity to comment on the Draft PSP. We recognize that IRWM is an evolving process and that DWR is taking steps to improve it at each stage. We hope the comments provided herein assist with that endeavor and look forward to release of

the final solicitation package in December. If you should have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Ara Azhderian
Water Policy Administrator
San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority

CCs:

Westside Integrated Water Resources Plan Stakeholders
San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors
Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors
Merced County Board of Supervisors
Fresno County Board of Supervisors
Kings County Board of Supervisors
Assembly Member Cathleen Galgiani
Assembly Member David Valadao
Assembly Member Henry Perea
Senate Member Anthony Cannella
Senate Member Tom Berryhill
Senate Member Michael Rubio
Mark Cowin – Director – Department of Water Resources